

## GROUNDWORK

### INDIAN AND INUIT INITIATIVES

Indian children on reserves and Inuit children are among the children most at risk in Canada. More than half of them live in low-income circumstances. The infant mortality rate is nearly twice as high as that of the non-native population. Indian and Inuit children have very high rates of death and illness from unintentional injuries, violence, and abuse. New "Brighter Futures" programs, funded by Health and Welfare Canada, are designed to improve the physical, mental and social well-being of **Inuit and status Indians** on reserves.

"Brighter Futures" is a call to action for all Canadians on behalf of Canada's children. It includes Canada's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Child Benefit announced in the February 1992 budget, Canada's Action Plan for the 1990s, and the \$500 million Child Development Initiative to reduce conditions of risk for children.

The implementation of the Aboriginal initiatives will be based on broad principles agreed upon by status Indian and Inuit people, particularly that it be community based and appropriate to local requirements, circumstances and cultures; that it support a wellness approach which includes spiritual, emotional, social and physical aspects; that it involve youth, women, and elders; and that it promote a balance among promotion, prevention, treatment, support and aftercare aspects of care. The federal role will be to develop partnerships for the provision of services, to break down barriers between communities, to support specialized training needs, to provide technical assistance for developing program models, networks, exchanges of information, evaluation designs, etc, to help communities to develop their own innovative and integrated approaches. A process jointly designed by government and status Indian and Inuit stakeholders will be used for program definition and appropriate delivery mechanisms.

#### Steps Through Community Action

The Indian and Inuit component of "Brighter Futures" addresses three areas.

The **COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE** responds to the needs and requests to deal with the serious mental health problems facing communities, such as suicide and family breakdown. The response is based on recommendations from the report entitled "Agenda for First Nations and Inuit Mental Health" and is the result of extensive dialogue about the problems and potential solutions at the community level.

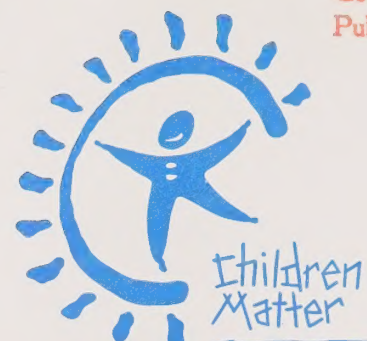
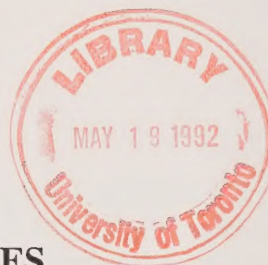
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## BACKGROUND

### INDIAN AND INUIT INITIATIVES

Indian children on reserves and Inuit children are among the children most at risk in Canada. More than half of them live in low-income circumstances. The infant mortality rate is nearly twice as high as that of the non-native population. Indian and Inuit communities have very high rates of death and illness from unintentional injuries, violence, and suicide. New "Brighter Futures" programs, funded by Health and Welfare Canada, are designed to improve the physical, mental and social well-being of **Inuit and status Indians on-reserve**.

"Brighter Futures" is a call to action for all Canadians on behalf of Canada's children. It includes Canada's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the proposed Child Benefit announced in the February 1992 budget, Canada's Action Plan for Children and the \$500 million Child Development Initiative to reduce conditions of risk for Canadian children.


The implementation of the Aboriginal initiatives will be based on broad principles recommended by status Indian and Inuit people, particularly that it be community based and controlled, appropriate to local requirements, circumstances and cultures; that it support a holistic wellness approach which includes spiritual, emotional, social and physical aspects; that it involve youth, women, and elders; and that it promote a balance among promotion, prevention, treatment, support and aftercare aspects of care. The federal role will be to facilitate partnerships for the provision of services, to break down barriers between jurisdictions, to support specialized training needs, to provide technical assistance for developing program models, networks, exchanges of information, evaluation designs, etc, to support communities to develop their own innovative and integrated approaches. A consultation process jointly designed by government and status Indian and Inuit stakeholders will lead to program definition and appropriate delivery mechanisms.

#### Partnerships Through Community Action

The Indian and Inuit component of "Brighter Futures" addresses three areas.

The **COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVE** responds to recommendations and requests to deal with the serious mental health problems facing communities, such as suicide and family breakdown. The response is based on recommendations from the report entitled "Agenda for First Nations and Inuit Mental Health", and is the result of extensive dialogue about the problems and potential solutions at the community level.

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The Community Mental Health Initiative recognizes that children's mental health needs should not be separated from those of their families and communities. The initiative will provide resources and technical assistance to support Inuit and on reserve status Indians to develop their own community mental health programs. The overall aim is to improve the quality of, and access to, culturally sensitive mental health services at the community level to help create healthy family and community environments in which children can thrive. It is a developmental initiative, designed with flexibility to meet local community needs, and will allow for consultation, training, study and planning.

The **CHILD DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE** will provide funding to communities for a variety of pre-school and after-school reinforcement follow-up activities for children ages 0 to 12 years. The aim of this initiative is to strengthen the existing child development network of social, health, medical, educational and cultural services.

Funded activities will act as linkages to overcoming program barriers ensuring an integrated and holistic child development service network. Possible interrelated activities could include parenting skill development, resource centres, toy lending libraries, infant stimulation, nutrition counselling. In addition, these same activities carried out during preschool years would need to be reinforced through the elementary after-school program to ensure long terms success.

The **SOLVENT ABUSE INITIATIVE** will lead to a comprehensive strategy which will provide assistance to communities to deal more effectively with this problem. This program will provide resources for the development of a range of prevention and treatment activities. This includes the creation of early intervention and prevention models and finding ways to support the development of appropriate treatment modalities. It will also assist in the re-integration of individuals into the community following treatment. Consultations will continue to take place with communities on the implementation of this initiative.

#### Prevention and Promotion

In addition, elements of the prevention and promotion components to the Child Development Initiative of "Brighter Futures" will be specifically aimed at status Indians on-reserve and Inuit communities.



The death rate from injuries among Indian children is significantly higher than among Canadian children in general. For example, injury related deaths of Indian children between the ages of 0-1 years is seven times greater than that of other children. The **INJURIES AMONG CHILDREN INITIATIVE** will work to reduce the rate of injuries among status Indians on-reserve and in Inuit communities. It will provide funding to train health care workers, develop modules for school curricula, produce videos and other materials, assist communities to develop appropriate by-laws, increase the number of people with first aid training, and progressively implement the Children's Hospitals Injury Research and Prevention Program (CHIRPP).

The **HEALTHY BABIES INITIATIVE** will enhance current health programming. It will include improved training of community health representatives, community health nurses and production of videos and other materials. The elements to be addressed include intensive surveillance of prenatal infections, promotion of regular prenatal examinations, an intensive anti-smoking campaign, improvement of access to genetic counselling, enhancement of nutrition education - particularly with respect to maternal nutrition and breast feeding - and early detection and treatment of anaemia and certain vitamin deficiencies in infants.











